The IIS University
Jaipur

# Meeting of Cultures in Select Works of Raja Rao and E. M. Forster

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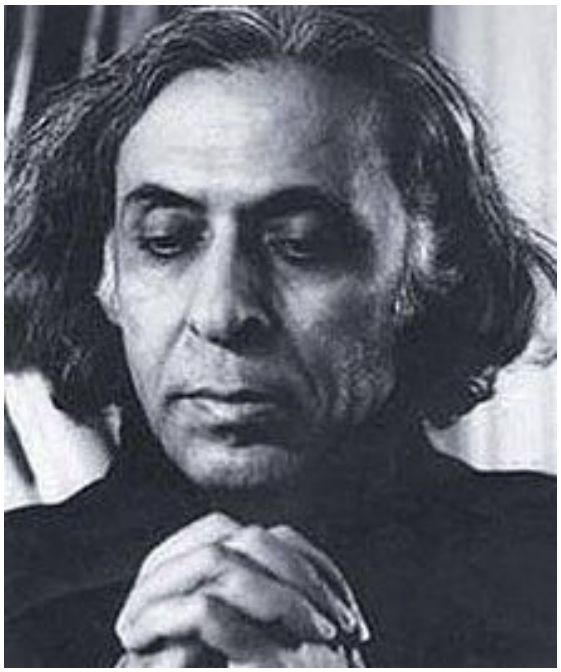
# Introducing Writers

Raja Rao
(1908-2006)



x. M. Forster

(1879-1970)

# Raja Rao's Works

## Novels

- The Chessmaster and His Moves (1988)
- Comrade Kirillov (1976)
- The Cat and Shakespeare: A Tale of India (1965)
- The Serpent and the Rope (1960)
- Kanthapura (1938)

## Short story collections

- On the Ganga Ghat (1989)
- The Policeman and the Rose (1978)
- The Cow of the Barricades and Other Stories (1947)

## Non-fiction

- The Great Indian Way: A Life of Mahatma Gandhi, biography (1998)
- The Meaning of India, essays (1996)
- Whither India? (edited with Iqbal Singh) (1948)
- Tomorrow (edited with Ahmed Ali) (1943-44)
- Changing India: An Anthology (edited with Iqbal Singh) (1939)

## Published Essays and Articles

- The Cave and the Conch (1983)
- Autobiography: Entering the Literary World (1979)
- The Caste of English (1978)
- The Meaning of India (1978)
- The Climate of Indian Literature Today (1972)
- Irish Interlude (1966)
- The Writer and the Word (1965)
- 'Jawaharlal Nehru: Recollections and Reflections' -- A Symposium (1964)
- Recollections of E. M. Forster (1964)

- Trivandrum *Andre Malraux Among the Gods of India* (1964)
- Varanasi (1961)
- Jupiter and Mars (1954)
- The Premier of *Sakuntala* (1943)
- Pandit Taranath (1935)
- Romain Rolland, the Great Sage (1933)
- Europe and Ourselves (1931)
- Pilgrimage to Europe (1931)

## Anthologies

- 5 Indian Masters (Raja Rao, Rabindranath Tagore, Premchand, Dr. Mulk Raj Anand, Khushwant Singh) (2003)
- The Best of Raja Rao (1998)

## Selected Unpublished works

- Daughter of the Mountain (vol. 2 of the Chessmaster trilogy)
- A Myrobalan in the Palm of Your Hand (vol. 3 of the Chessmaster trilogy)

# Raja Rao's Works Studied

a) The Serpent and the Rope (1960)

b) Kanthapura (1938)

## *The Serpent and the Rope (1960 )*

Theme

Quest for self identity and truth

Interracial and intercultural relationship

*The Serpent and the Rope* is a Story of a search for spritual truth in Europe and India. The work dramatize the relatioships between Indian and Western cultures. As Ramaswamy struggles with commitments imposed on him by his hindu family, his wife becomes a Buddhist in her spiritual quest and renounces worldly desires. She leaves her husband to find his own true self and also metaphysics of death. This leads to an inner truth of life.

The relationship between Rama and Madeline, the eventual failure of their marriage is a reflection on the nature and consequences of an inter-racial marriage. Rama and Madeline are both evolved beings. But they fail to remain united in their journy of life. Ramaswamy is profoundly rooted in his culture. His wife Madeline does not partake of his inner-self whereas in Savitri he finds a perfect spiritual companion as in spite of her modern ways she wears kumkum, choli, black beads which are essentialy Indian.

# *Kanthapura (1938)*

Theme

Indian Culture and the struggle for freedom

Class distinctions

Raja Rao's novel *Kanthapura* is the first major Indian novel in English. It is a fictional but realistic account of how the great majority of people in India lived their lives under British rule and how they responded to the ideas and ideals of Indian nationalism. Narrated by an old woman inhabitant of kanthapura it evokes the spirit of India's traditional religious faith, while at the same time coming into conflict with the conservative orthodoxy of the day.

The book has been considered by many to be the first classic modern Indian writing in English and is thought of as one of the best,Gandhian novels in English.

# E.M.Forster's Works

## Novels

- Arctic Summer (an incomplete fragment, written in 1912–13, published posthumously in 2003)
- Maurice (written in 1913–14, published posthumously in 1971)
- A Passage to India (1924)
- Howards End (1910)
- A Room with a View (1908)
- The Longest Journey (1907)
- Where Angels Fear to Tread (1905)

## Collection of Short stories

- The Life to Come and other stories (1972)
- Collected Short Stories (1947)
- The Eternal Moment and other stories (1928)
- The Celestial Omnibus (and other stories) (1911)

## Collections of Essays and Broadcasts

- Two Cheers for Democracy (1951)
- Abinger Harvest (1936)

## Literary Criticism

- The Feminine Note in Literature (posthumous) (2001)
- Aspects of the Novel (1927)

## Biography

- Goldsworthy Lowes Dickinson (1934)
- Marianne Thornton, A Domestic Biography (1956)

## Travel Writing

- Alexandria: A History and Guide (1922)
- Pharos and Pharillon (A Novelist's Sketchbook of Alexandria Through the Ages) (1923)
- The Hill of Devi (1953)

## Miscellaneous Writings

- Selected Letters (1983–85)
- Commonplace Book (fascimile ed. 1978; edited by Philip Gardner, 1985)
- Locked Diary (2007) (held at King's College, Cambridge)

# E.M.Forster's Works Studied

a) A Passage to India(1924)

b) A Room with a View(1908)

## *A Passage to India(1924)*

Theme

Meeting of Culture

Imperialism

*A Passage to India* begins and ends by posing the question of whether it is possible for an Englishman and an Indian to ever be friends, at least within the context of British colonialism. Forster uses this question as a framework to explore the general issue of Britain's political control of India on a more personal level, through the friendship between Aziz and Fielding. At the beginning of the novel, Aziz is scornful of the English, wishing only to consider them comically or ignore them completely. Yet the intuitive connection Aziz feels with Mrs. Moore in the mosque opens him to the possibility of friendship with Fielding. Through the first half of the novel, Fielding and Aziz represent a positive model of liberal humanism: Forster suggests that British rule in India could be successful and respectful if only English and Indians treated each other as Fielding and Aziz treat each other—as worthy individuals who connect through frankness, intelligence, and good will.

Yet in the aftermath of the novel's climax—Adela's accusation that Aziz attempted to assault her and her subsequent disavowal of this accusation at the trial—Aziz and Fielding's friendship falls apart. The strains on their relationship are external in nature, as Aziz and Fielding both suffer from the tendencies of their cultures. Aziz tends to let his imagination run away with him and to let suspicion harden into a grudge. Fielding suffers from an English literalism and rationalism that blind him to Aziz's true feelings and make Fielding too stilted to reach out to Aziz through conversations or letters. Furthermore, their respective Indian and English communities pull them apart through their mutual stereotyping. As we see at the end of the novel, even the landscape of India seems to oppress their friendship.

Forster's final vision of the possibility of English-Indian friendship is a pessimistic one, yet it is qualified by the possibility of friendship on English soil, or after the liberation of India. As the landscape itself seems to imply at the end of the novel, such a friendship may be possible eventually, but "not yet."

# *A Room with a View(1908)*

## Theme

### Class Snobbery

### Convention and Passion

Class snobbery is a constant feature of *A Room with a View*. The Emersons, because they are not refined, are the most frequent victims of this snobbery. Country gentry look down on those who work hard for a living; Cecil looks down on the suburban ways of country gentry. Lucy has to overcome the class bigotry that she has been taught.

The conflict between social convention and passion is a central theme of the novel. Lucy's match with George, by social standards, is completely unacceptable. But it is the only match that could make her happy. Her match with Cecil is far more conventional, but marriage to Cecil would destroy Lucy's spirit. The Emersons are truly unconventional people. They care almost nothing for propriety. Mr. Emerson, a Socialist, speaks with great feeling about the importance of passion and the beauty of the human body. The British characters of the novel have very strong ideas about the need to repress passion and control young girls. To achieve happiness, Lucy will have to fight these standards, many of which she has internalized, and learn to appreciate her own desires.

# Review of Published Literature

Books on

Raja Rao and E. M. Forster

**Piciucco, Pier Paollo, ed. *A Companion to Indian Fiction in English.* New Delhi: Atlantic, 2011. Print.**

A companion to Indian fiction in English is a compalition and analysis of the works of major Indian authors who write in English and were born in India. Some of the writers disussed in it are R. K. Narayan, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, etc.

The companion reflects current trends in terms of material discussed and also in the chioce if issues analysed, mirroring, the focus of interest of present day studies. The companion has an innovative section, dedicated to synopses of novels, planned to allow readers to immediately place the authors analysed within the panorama of Indian literature in English.

The book is useful for my research as it discusses Raja Rao's magic wand of creativity, power of discription, art of characterization, setting, themes like East-West encounter, Gandhian philosophy in his major works.

**Patel, Dr. M. F. *Literary Criticism in Indian English Literature*. Jaipur: Pointer Publishers, 2011. Print.**

The anthology Literary Criticism in Indian English Literature contains articles on significant works of distinguished authors like Raja Rao, Anita Desai, Dattani and Grish Karnad.

The article in the book titled " History, Myth and Realism in Raja Rao's Kanthapura" discusses in detail the use of history, myth and realism in his novel *Kanthapura.*

The anthology is useful as it not only discusses Raja Rao's celebrated novels in detail but even contain scholarly articles on some of the prominent writers.

**Rao, M. Subba. *Readings in Indo-Anglian Literature: Prospective and Retrospective*. Delhi: Kanishka Publications, 1995. Print.**

The book contains many articles on Raja Rao and his contemporaries.The article "*Raja Rao-The Pathbreaker"* is useful for my research as it discusses universality of his themes by parading the historical or mythological together and also discusses the linguistic device and symbolism used by Raja Rao in his major works.

**Prasad Amarnath, Kanupriya, eds. *Indian Writing in English Tradition and Modernity*. New Delhi: Sarup and Sons, 2010. Print.**

Tradition and Modernity is a collection of scholarly articles and research papers contributed by different scholars hailing from the different parts of the country. It critically evaluates the various aspects of Indian Writing in English. Some of the papers are also related to the different trends of Indian Writing in English. It covers the following authors: R. N. Tagore, Sri Aurobindo, Mulk Raj Anand, Raja Rao, U. R. Ananth Murthy, Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, Arun Joshu, kamala Markandaya, Anita Desai, Amitav Ghosh, Manju Kapur, Nirad C. Choudhary, Missim Ezekiel, Vijay Tendulkar, Grish Karnad, mahesh Dattani and B. S . Naikar.

All the articles of this book have been so judiciously selected that they may certainly, as it is hoped, cater to the need of all types of readers - students, teachers and those research scholars who want to be acquainted with the writers of both modernity and tradition in Indian Writing in English.

This book helps me to study in detail the Gandhian ideaology like self purification, hindu-muslim unity, truth, non-violence in the works of Raja Rao.

**Sarangi, Jaydeep.** ***Raja Rao: The Master and His Moves*****. Delhi: Authors Press, 2007. Print.**

This book contains scholarly articles on Raja Rao. It tries to analyse Raja Rao as a fiction and non-fiction writer.

This book helps me to understand Raja Rao's novels from different aspects, such as blend of myths and reality, image of Indian women during freedom struggle, concept of Indianness, Gandhian movement, history, colony, nation, dalit and freedom struggle in Raja Rao's Kanthapura.

**Pandey, Mithilesh K.** ***Akademi Awarded Novels in English: Millennium Responses.*** **Delhi: Sarup & Sons,2003. Print.**

Indian novel in English is a significant component of commonwealth literature with writers like Mulk Raj Anand, R.K. Narayan and Raja Rao among others winning international acclaim as men of letters. The premier institution of India, the National Academy of Letters, i.e. Sahitya Akademi has acknowledged the excellence of several works of fiction over the years. Rooted in the native ethos, these novels manifest the cultural plurality of our polity in the fascinating mozaic of marga and desi traditions. This volume, comprising eighteen perceptive essays, focuses on the nine Akademi awarded novels by male writers to underline their thematic and artistic virtuosity.

Divided in two sections, the essays provide insightful critiques of post-independence Indian classics like *The Guide, The Serpent and the Rope, Shadow From Ladakh, Morning Face, Azadi, The Last Labyrinth, The Golden Gate, The Shadow Lines, and The Trotter-Nama*. The contributors include senior scholars of English with proven expertise in the Indian English fiction.

The two article on Raja Rao discusses *The Serpent and the Rope* as a synthesis of culture and philosophy and a way towards the discovery of the self.

**Tripathi, J.P. *Raja Rao: The Fictionist*. New Delhi: B.R. Publication ,2003. Print.**

This book is a critical study of Raja Rao's fictional works.This book is divided into eight chapters, that focus on the critical and analytical study of the novels and short stories of Raja Rao.

The first chapter is introductory in nature, while the second one is on Rao's short stories. The third chapters handles plot, theme, emotion and narrative technique in his novels; the fourth treats his art of characterization; the fifth dwells on his language and style; the sixth conciders his use of images and symbols; and the seventh takes into account his vision of lifes or his philosophical outlook upon life. The eighth chapter draws conclusions.

This book will be a great help in the critical understanding of the writer's work.

**Mittapalli Rajeshwar, Pier Paolo Piciucco, eds. *The Fiction of Raja Rao*. New Delhi: Atlantic Publishers, 2001. Print.**

In this volume, an attempt has been made to access Raja Rao's novels and short stories in terms of his, philosophy, vision, style, themes and techniques.

The articles contained in this volume perceptively treat all the important concerns, themes and techniques of his fiction. A significant number of them focus on his style and his handling of the English language for artistic and creative purposes. His vision and philosophy are treated in an equally big number of articles. themes such as identity, myth and gandhian idealogy have been the central points of discussion.

This detailed analysis on Raja Rao will surely enrich my research.

**Ramchandra, Ragini. *Raja Rao: An Anthology of Recent Criticism*. Delhi: Pencraft, 2000. Print.**

This volume of recent essays on Raja Rao, in conjunction with two earlier but seminal studies, brings together some of the most discerning critical responses to the oeuvre of this pioneering Indian English fictionist. It examines how Raja Rao resolves into controlled art the discords of the individual and the cosmic in Human concerns, the meditative and the innovative in his prose, and the varied tropes of his narrative techniques. The volume also includes detailed readings and revaluations of all his major books.

The aspects of Raja Rao's art that come under close scrutiny in this volume include his interrogation of the spiritual ferment in modern times, his indigenization of language as a singular contribution towards the evolution of an authentic international english, the unprecedented use he makes of the novel form by positioning metaphysical explorations as the basis of writing itself, the progression in his books and the construction of the feminine principle, and his view of literature as a sádhana, quite in the tradition of ancient indian writers. It is hoped that the volume shall evoke interest and benefit the readers.

**Celly, Anu.** ***Women in Raja Rao's Novel: A Feminist Reading of The Serpent and the Rope*****. Jaipur: Printwell, 1995. Print.**

The book is a critical study of *The Serpent and the Rope*. It relates the feminist perspective in the analysis of women characters in the novel. The study of women's portrayal from a feminist angle necessitates an analysis of the position of women in relation with man, family and society in content of the sociological, traditional, cultural and literary concerns.

This book is helpful as it closely analysis the female characters in Raja Rao's works. In a way this analysis helps me to understand culture, as women are said to be the custodian of culture.

**Sharrad, Paul. *Raja Rao and Cultural Tradition*. New Delhi: Sterling, 1987. Print.**

This book incorporates many scholarly articles on Raja Rao's works in detail with major concern on cultural aspect in his work. It also focus on themes, characters and style of his writing.

The book is helpful for my research as it discusses almost all the major works of Raja Rao in quite detail.

**Sharma, K. K., ed. *Perspective on Raja Rao*. Ghaziabad: Vimal, 1980. Print.**

This volume comprises articles with thorough and critical approach of almost all the basic aspects of the thematic and technical sides of Raja Rao's fiction.

It begins with a comprehensive critical introduction, discussing coherently and objectively his major themes, the various aspects of his technique - plot, structure, charcterization, and the chief merits and weakness of his art.

**Bloom, Harold. *A Passage to India*. New York: Viva, 2008. Print.**

This book gives a detail study of E.M.Forster's *A Passage to India* which takes its tension from British Imperial rule in India and its subsequent upheavel and violence. Though critical of Britain's policy and sympathetic of the indian cause and culture, the novel transcends mere historical account due to its modernist sensibilities and challenge to traditional western spirituality.Early criticism reflected particular attention to the novel's politics. More recently critics examined structure, homoerotic overtones, its place in Forster's body of work, and the Indian response to the novel.

This book helps in my research as it examinies *A Passage to India* in detail.

**Mitra, Reena. E. M. Forster: *A Passage to India*. New Delhi: Atlantic. 2008. Print.**

This book is divided into eight chapters and contains articles talking on various aspects of the Forster's novel like the novel as a modernist narrative, quest for human harmony, gender race and sexuality, cultural misunderstanding.

This book helps me as it discusses in detail many of the aspect of the novel in detail.

**Royle, Nicholas. *E.M.Forster*. United Kingdom: Nicholas Royale, 1957. Print.**

This study presents a new Forster - one that has emerged from the post - humous publication of his explicity homosexual fiction (since 1971) and from a new critical attention to issues of language and textuality, Englishness and national identity, colonialism and postcolonialism, gender and queer theory. Royale provides detailed readings of all Forster's novels, as well as of critical writings such as his *Aspects of the Novel.* He explores the idea that Forster wrote not one, but six queer novels. Instead, contrary to what may seem critical commonsense, this study proposes that *Maurice* is in some respects Forster's least queer book.

All of his novels, however, are charged with a powerful eroticism and evoke a constant fascination with the generative peculiarities of words themselves. Focusing on such topics as the unforeseeable and the uncanny, deferred meaning and telepathy, Royal arues that Forster's work is starnger, more complex and compelling than earlier critical accounts may have suggested.

This book is useful for the research as it critically discusses Forster's works.

# Books on Culture

**Nayer, Pramod. K. *Postcolonial Literature An Introduction.* Delhi: Dooling Kindersley, 2008. Print.**

This book with its seven thematically organized chapters, lucidly elucidates complex concepts and formulations of postcolonial literature and theory and critically analyses their various dimensions with relevant examples from contemporary postcolonial writing.

The book would also appeal to the general reader aiming to gain a thorough understanding of the fundamental themes and discourses of postcolonial literature.

The book talks of Colonialism, Imperialism, Culture, Hybridity, Nation and many such terms which helps me in my research.

**Powys, John Cowper. *The Meaning of Culture.* London: Rupa, 1960. Print.**

The aim of this book as John declares, ‘is to narrow down a vague and somewhat evasive conception, which hitherto, like "aristocracy" or "liberty", has come to imply a number of contradictory and even paradoxical elements, and to give it, not, of course, a purely logical form, but a concrete, particular, recognizable form, malleable and yielding enough and relative enough, but with a definite and quite unambiguous temper, tone, quality, atmosphere, of its own.’

The book is in two parts: Analysis of Culture which deals with, in separate chapters, Philosophy, Literature, Poetry, Painting and Religion: Application of Culture which covers Happiness, Love, Nature, The Art of Reading, Human Relations, Destiny and Obstacles to Culture.

John Cowper Powys hoped ‘that the fine word "culture" might lend itself to an easy, humane and liberal discussion - a sort of one-man Platonic symposium - and even turn out to contain, among its various implications, no unworthy clue to the narrow path of the wise upon earth.’ He succeeds completely, in his own idiosyncratic way, in achieving that.

This book is very useful in the understanding of culture and its construction.

# Journals

**Joseph, John E. "The Serpent and the Rope – Raja Rao's novelty of craftmenship"** ***Indian Streams Research Journal*** **2.3(April.2012): 1-4.Web 12 Feb.2013**

Raja Rao's The Serpent and the Rope is an Indian English novel acclaimed as an Indian classic. Critics have termed this novel as the spiritual autobiography of the novelist because the events and incidents depicted in the life of the protagonist, Ramaswamy, point not only to his ( the author's) own life-story but also to his metaphysical awakening through the absolutely monistic Vedanta philosophy. The novel has all the ingredients -- story, plot, social criticism, philosophy of life, characterization, dialogue – that go into the composition of a novel.

The present study is a modest attempt to analyze the novelty in the craftsmanship that the author has adopted in dealing with each of the characteristics mentioned above.

**Gohain,Hiren. "The other side of the Moon: E.M Forster's India". *The Economic and Political Weekly* 17.31 (1982) 58.63. Web. 9 Feb 2013.**

The theme of E.M.Forster's A Passage to India has aroused controversy.According to some critics, the political background of the novel is really concerned with metaphysical ideas, others emphasise the political nature of the incidents and their repercussions, in this view the novel is really about struggle between Britain's imperial rule in India.

The paper suggest that both these approaches are incorrect and inadequate, underneath the glow of imperial and nature rhetoric, the author argues, Forster's never disavowed colonialism. The novel represents the crisis of the liberal faith in which India is the echoing background and against which the liberal conscience reveals it's hollowness.

**Rothfork, John. "Religion and Culture in Raja Rao's The Serpent and the Rope." *Journal of Literary Studies*. 4.2(1981):25-43. Print.**

This article Religion and Culture in Raja Rao's novel *The Serpent and the Rope* talks about a complex fictional treatment of intercultural contact with ultimately suggest that religion is an insurmountable barrier to mutual understanding among people from different cultures.

# Further Readings

*Cotemporary Postcolonial Theory(2009)*

- Padmini Mongia

*The History of Indian Literature in English(2003)*

-Arvind Krishna Mehrotra

*Major English Novelist and Novels(2001)*

- Pramod Kumar Singh

*The Imperial Experiences:From Carlyle to Forster(1996)*

- C.C Edridge

*The Location of Culture(1994)*

- Homi Bhaha

*Myths and Symbols in Raja Rao and R.K.Narayan(1994)*

- Rajesh.K.Pallan

*The Twice Born Fiction:Themes and Techniques of Indian Novel in English(1974)*

-Meenakshi Mukherjee

*E.M.Forster(1965)*

- Lionel Trilling